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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/623,957	07/21/2003	Wesley D. Johnson	1842-0019	6059

28078 7590 09/21/2006

MAGINOT, MOORE & BECK, LLP
CHASE TOWER
111 MONUMENT CIRCLE
SUITE 3250
INDIANAPOLIS, IN 46204

EXAMINER

COMSTOCK, DAVID C

ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
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3733

DATE MAILED: 09/21/2006

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

82

Office Action Summary	Application No.	Applicant(s)	
	10/623,957	JOHNSON ET AL.	
	Examiner	Art Unit	
	David Comstock	3733	

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --.

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 11 July 2006.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 192-197 and 209-211 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 192-197 and 209-211 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☒ The drawing(s) filed on 21 July 2003 is/are: a) ☒ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of References Cited (PTO-892) | 4) <input type="checkbox"/> Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____ |
| 2) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948) | 5) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152) |
| 3) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date <u>see action</u> . | 6) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

DETAILED ACTION

Information Disclosure Statement

The following Information Disclosure Statements have been considered by the Examiner: 7/21/03, 11/11/03, 7/19/04, 10/12/04, 9/9/05, and 5/22/06. Initialed and signed copies are included with the present action.

Election/Restrictions

Applicant's election without traverse of the invention of Group II and cancellation of claims 1-191 and 198-208 without prejudice in the reply filed on 11 July 2006 is acknowledged. In addition, new claims 209-211 are acknowledged. Accordingly, claims 192-197 and 209-211 are currently pending.

Double Patenting

The nonstatutory double patenting rejection is based on a judicially created doctrine grounded in public policy (a policy reflected in the statute) so as to prevent the unjustified or improper timewise extension of the "right to exclude" granted by a patent and to prevent possible harassment by multiple assignees. A nonstatutory obviousness-type double patenting rejection is appropriate where the conflicting claims are not identical, but at least one examined application claim is not patentably distinct from the reference claim(s) because the examined application claim is either anticipated by, or would have been obvious over, the reference claim(s). See, e.g., *In re Berg*, 140 F.3d 1428, 46 USPQ2d 1226 (Fed. Cir. 1998); *In re Goodman*, 11 F.3d 1046, 29 USPQ2d 2010 (Fed. Cir. 1993); *In re Longi*, 759 F.2d 887, 225 USPQ 645 (Fed. Cir. 1985); *In re Van Ornum*, 686 F.2d 937, 214 USPQ 761 (CCPA 1982); *In re Vogel*, 422 F.2d 438, 164 USPQ 619 (CCPA 1970); and *In re Thorington*, 418 F.2d 528, 163 USPQ 644 (CCPA 1969).

A timely filed terminal disclaimer in compliance with 37 CFR 1.321(c) or 1.321(d) may be used to overcome an actual or provisional rejection based on a nonstatutory double patenting ground provided the conflicting application or patent either is shown to be commonly owned with this application, or claims an invention made as a result of activities undertaken within the scope of a joint research agreement.

Art Unit: 3733

Effective January 1, 1994, a registered attorney or agent of record may sign a terminal disclaimer. A terminal disclaimer signed by the assignee must fully comply with 37 CFR 3.73(b).

Claims 192-197 and 209-211 are provisionally rejected on the ground of nonstatutory obviousness-type double patenting as being unpatentable over all pending method claims, including claims 202-208, 231 and 232, of copending Application No. 10/458,174; over all pending method claims, including claims 98-125, of copending Application No. 10/623,791; over all pending method claims, including 117, 118, 121, 125-129 and 201-218 of copending Application No. 10/624,066; over all pending method claims, including claims 1-38, of copending Application No. 11/084,288; and over all pending method claims, including claims 1-38, of copending Application No. 11/371,475. Although the conflicting claims are not identical, they are not patentably distinct from each other because they all set forth substantially the same invention using only different phraseology. Where actual differences exist, the differences amount to mere differences in phraseology and/or obvious modifications with respect to the other claimed inventions. For example, changing the terminology "wafer" to "element" does not significantly change the scope of the claim in terms of patentability, especially in light of the other requirements pertaining to how the elements are stacked. Likewise, merely increasing the size or area of the wafers would be an obvious matter to a person of ordinary skill in the art, in order to decrease pressure on the affected portions of the vertebra. In addition, it is noted that the "limitations" set forth in claims 194-197, 209 and 210 have not been given patentable weight since they do not set forth any active steps and do not affect the claimed method in a manipulative sense.

This is a provisional obviousness-type double patenting rejection because the conflicting claims have not in fact been patented.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(b) the invention was patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country or in public use or on sale in this country, more than one year prior to the date of application for patent in the United States.

Claims 192-197 and 209-211 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being clearly anticipated by Brantigan (5,192,327; cited by Applicant). Brantigan discloses accessing a space comprising an intradiscal space between two generally opposed upper and lower vertebral bodies, e.g. 50. An expandable structure 10 comprising a top element, a bottom element and a plurality of intermediate elements, e.g. 21, is placed between the bodies and a bone filler material, e.g. 58, 66, is introduced (see, e.g., Figs. 11 and 12 and col. 6, line 37 - col. 7, line 28).

Conclusion

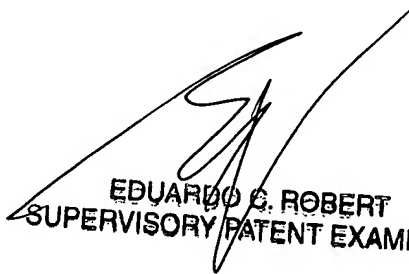
Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to David Comstock whose telephone number is (571) 272-4710. Please leave a detailed voice message if examiner is unavailable. If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Eduardo Robert can be reached at (571) 272-4719. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Art Unit: 3733

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).



D. Comstock



EDUARDO C. ROBERT
SUPERVISORY PATENT EXAMINER